

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ASMARA 00125 120930Z

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FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 3823

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0125

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC ET

SUBJECT: SECURITY OF AMERICAN STAFF OF CONGEN

REF: A. 75 ASMARA 1031, B. 75 ADDIS ABABA 14949

1. IN KEEPING WITH EMBASSY CONCURRENCE THAT CONSTANT REVIEW BE MADE OF SECURITY MEASURES REQUIRING AMERICAN STAFF TO OVERNIGHT AT CONGEN COMPOUND OR OTHER DESIGNATED SECURE AREA IN ASMARA, THIS REPORT IS SUBMITTED. STAFF HAS BEEN SO RESTRICTED SINCE LAST WEEK OF DECEMBER 1975.

2. DESPITE THE RELEASE OF TWO OF THE FIVE AMERICAN HOSTAGES HELD BY ONE OF VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE FRONT (ELF/PLF), I BELIEVE THAT THE OVERALL SECURITY SITUATION FOR AMERICANS WAS NOT MARKEDLY CHANGED DURING THE MONTH OF JANUARY OR, SO FAR, DURING FEBRUARY. THE PERIOD WAS RELATIVELY CALM IN TERMS OF FIREFIGHTS AND OTHER INCIDENTS, EXCEPT FOR MUDDLED INSURRRNT EFFORTS TO DISRUPT PUBLIC UTILITIES AND AIRPORT IN MID-JANUARY. DURING THIS PERIOD, AS ADDITIONAL SECURITY PRECAUTION, AMERICAN DEPENDENTS OF BOTH STATE AND DOD-CONTRACT EMPLOYEES WERE ORDERED EVACUATED. EVACUATION OF STATE DEPENDENTS WAS COMPLETED ON FEB 2 AND THAT OF CONTRACT EMPLOYEES OF FEB 10.

3. THIS EVACUATION RELIEVED TO SOME DEGREE RESTRICTIVE HOUSING SITUATION EXISTING ON CONGEN COMPOUND AND SUITABLE REARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE. DPO HAS BEEN MOVED INTO HOUSE WITH ADMIN OFFICER, COMMUNICATOR IS SHARING NCOIC'S
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HOUSE, AND THREE MARINES WILL SHORTLY BE MOVED INTO HOUSE

VACATED BY SENIOR LOCAL EMPLOYEE. OTHER TGO MARINES OCCUPYING FORMER OFFICE SPACE. GSO AND SECRETARY OCCUPYING SLEEPING QUARTERS AT KAGNEW TRACT E. WHILE THESE MODIFICATIONS OF HOUSING GIVE EACH AMERICAN MEMBER OF THE CONGEN STAFF AT LEAST HIS OWN BEDROOM AND MAXIMIZES ACCESS TO AVAILABLE AMENITIES, I DO NOT CONSIDER THESE MOVES ADEQUATE, IN THEMSELVES, AS A LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO HOUSING PROBLEMS. I FEEL I SHOULD RETAIN ALL USG-LEASED QUARTERS FOR NOW, IN THE HOPE THAT THE LOCAL SECURITY SITUATION MIGHT IMPROVE. FURTHER, ALTHOUGH SHELVED FOR THE MOMENT, THE IDEA OF CREATING ANOTHER SMALL GUARDED COMPOUND HAS NOT BEEN DISCARDED DESPITE A NUMBER OF PRACTICAL OBSTACLES. ALTHOUGH CONTENTMENT WITH CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS IS NOT ABSOLUTE, STAFF MEMBERS FEEL THAT AS LONG AS HOUSING SITUATION SUBJECT TO REGULAR REVIEW AND TO POSSIBLE MIDIFICATION, CURRENT SITUATION IS BEARABLE.

4. FOR DEPT: AS OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST, WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING DEPT'S VIEWS ON IDEA OF SOME FORM OF R&R OUTSIDE OF ETHIOPIA EVERY TWO MOHWHS FOR ASMARA STAFF AS PROPOSED BY EMBASSY ADDIS (REF B).
SHERRY

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